

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### Grants Fund School Field Trips

DES MOINES, Iowa-As school districts across the state grapple with shrinking budgets, the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs is once again able to offer grant funds for field trips to cultural sites and events across the state, thanks to support from the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, Casey's General Store, Inc., the Greater Des Moines Foundation and individual contributors.

DCA launched the Big Yellow School Bus program two years ago in response to school budget cuts that forced the cancellation of all field trips in many school districts.

The department renewed the program with \$20,000 this school year, but the money was depleted before the end of November.

"The overwhelming response we have received with this program shows how much this money is needed," said Anita Walker, director of the Department of Cultural Affairs. "Our partners stepping up to make sure students have an opportunity to experience the arts in Iowa."

Last year, 10,000 Iowa kids from 100 Iowa schools were able to hear an orchestra, experience drama on the stage or see a master work of art. Students from small school districts like Millersburg, Blue Grass and Sully to large school districts like Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Sioux City were able to experience the arts for what could be their only time. These field trips allow kids to see how their classroom learning applies to the real world.

"My building took our entire sixth grade to the Civic Center to see 'Sacagawea', in part thanks to our Yellow School Bus grant from the Iowa Arts Council," said Carol Bittner, a Des Moines art teacher at Hiatt Middle School. "That gave us \$200 toward the \$260 needed for four buses. We are an inner city middle school with 69 percent free and reduced lunch and 49 percent minority enrollment."

Contributions toward the program include \$5,000 from the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, \$1,000 from Casey's General Store, Inc., \$2,000 from the Greater Des Moines Foundation and \$500 from individual donors to help bring the Big Yellow School Bus grant back for a third year.

"Access to the arts and education for Iowa's children should not be dependent upon their zip code," said Dave Lyons, business development director for the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation. "Farm Bureau supports quality education for all Iowa students, particularly those in our rural communities."

Contributions are still being sought to fund this program through the end of the 2003-2004 school year and can be directed to Margi Weiss at 515-281-8823.

Grants worth \$200 each will be provided on a first-come, first-serve basis until funds are expended. A simple final report needs to be completed following the event. The Big Yellow School Bus complete grant guidelines and application form are available on the Web at [www.iowaartscouncil.org](http://www.iowaartscouncil.org).

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